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## ABSTRACT

A study of 373 teachers investigated sex as a variable affecting teacher perceptions. The study identified 20 factors which teachers perceived as affecting their performance. The factors were evenly divided between non-teacher-controlled and teacher-controlled. Teachers of both sexes agreed that skill in human relations was the most important factor affecting teaching success. An analysis of responses to non-teacher-controlled factors indicated that male teachers perceived the socioeconomic level of the students' families to be more important than did female teachers. Male teachers appeared to perceive success as resulting more from student performance, while female teachers perceived success as resulting more from teacher activity. Males also put a higher priority on being assigned more academically talented students. An examination of teacher-controlled factors indicated that female teachers put high emphasis upon possessing substantial knowledge of subjects taught, while males considered this moderately important. Female teachers also rated possessing an understanding of self and personal motives extremely high, while males rated the factor only moderately high. Findings revealed that females teachers place a high degree of importance on teacher-controlled factors in teaching success and have confidence in their ability to control their professional destiny. (JD)

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# THE EFFECT OF SEX AS A VARIABLE IN TEACHER PERCEPTION

by George W. Garrett

A study of 10,500 teachers, sponsored by the East Texas School Study Council produced a random sample of 373 teachers in which sex was investigated as one of the variables affecting teacher perceptions. The study identified twenty factors which teachers perceived as affecting their performance. As indicated in Table I, the factors were evenly divided between non-teacher controlled and teacher-controlled factors.

( INSERT TABLE I )

Teachers of both sexes were in strong agreement that "Skill in Human Relations" was the most important factor affecting teaching success. However, important differences were found between the views of men and women regarding some educational factors, as had been the case in previous studies. In his Five-Towns Study, Dan Lortie found differences based on a combination of age and sex. He observed that involvement in professional related activity varied with age for men as it did for women, but not in the same manner. Men high school teachers worked less than women teachers. Men teachers who planned to leave the profession worked the fewest number of hours. A feature of life involvement (Lortie, 1975:94) of male teachers over forty was that almost every such man had either a strong interest outside teaching, or an additional source of income. For women teachers the outlook was somewhat different. Prior to age forty, women teachers appeared to devote less time to teaching than they did after forty due to strong outside interests such as marriage, having children, or leaving the profession to later return.

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Table I

## Factors Ranked by Importance to Teaching Success

| Order by<br>Score Value | Success Factors                                                     | Total Score<br>Value |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1                       | *Possesses skill in human relations                                 | 1,712                |
| 2                       | Strongly supported by the school administration                     | 1,689                |
| 3                       | *Possesses substantial knowledge of the subject taught              | 1,655                |
| 4                       | *Possesses skill in methods of instruction                          | 1,654                |
| 5                       | *Views pupil as capable of benefiting from the teacher's effort     | 1,637                |
| 6                       | *Willing to use his or her own time to help a student               | 1,616                |
| 7                       | *Possesses an understanding of self and his or her personal motives | 1,615                |
| 8                       | *Desires to grow professionally as an educator                      | 1,605                |
| 9                       | *Able to maintain persistent effort in spite of difficulty          | 1,595                |
| 10                      | *Willing to work hard and long hours                                | 1,554                |
| 11                      | Assigned to a school headed by a capable principal                  | 1,520                |
| 12                      | Teaches in school district that maintains strict discipline         | 1,440                |
| 13                      | Has an adequate amount of teaching supplies                         | 1,438                |
| 14                      | Demonstrates innate teaching ability                                | 1,431                |
| 15                      | Supported by well-planned facilities                                | 1,419                |

Table I continued

| Order by<br>Score Value | Success Factors                                             | Total Score<br>Value |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 16                      | *Has emmbership in a professional organization              | 1,048                |
| 17                      | Has to have a certain amount of luck in many situations     | 901                  |
| 18                      | Attended a highly-regarded school of education              | 891                  |
| 19                      | Teaches in a middle-class or higher socioeconomic community | 769                  |
| 20                      | Assigned more academically talented students                | 744                  |

\*Indicates teacher-controlled factor.

Interval levels of importance for the Success Factors:

373 - 745 = Very little importance  
 748 - 1,118 = Slight importance  
 1,119 - 1,491 = Moderate importance  
 1,492 - 1,677 = High Importance  
 1,678 - 1,865 = Extremely high importance

In a study of whether teachers attributed success and failure to internal or external factors, Feather (1969:136) found that the only significant effect was that due to sex. Females were more likely to attribute their success or failure to external factors (good or bad luck) than were males. Enthusiasm for entering the teaching profession was another variable which seemed to be related to sex in the Five-Towns Study. Lortie (1975:38) found that women, especially those who selected elementary teaching, were the most eager recruits. Men were more hesitant about entering the profession.

The factors which produced significant differences between male and female teachers in this study are shown in table 2.

Table 2  
Factors producing significant differences between  
Male and Female Teachers

| Success Factors                                               | $\chi^2$ |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Teaching in a middle-class or higher socioeconomic community. | 11.78    |
| Is assigned more academically talented students.              | 17.77    |
| * Possesses substantial knowledge of the matter.              | 10.66    |
| * Possesses an understanding of self and personal motives.    | 10.21    |

df = 2, p. .05

\* Indicates teacher-controlled factors

Non-teacher-controlled factors.

The factor, "Teaching in a middle-class or higher socioeconomic

community" was perceived as being considerably less important by women than by men teachers. This finding indicated that men were closer to the findings of educational research in their assessment of this factor than were women teachers. The Coleman Report (1966:399) Equality of Educational Opportunity, had concluded that the highest correlate with student achievement was the socioeconomic level of his family. On the surface it might appear that women teachers are more optimistic than men. A more plausible explanation is that men perceive success as resulting more from the pupil's performance, while women teachers perceive success as resulting more from teacher activity. The difference between the perception of men and women teachers was even stronger regarding the factor "Is assigned more academically talented students." Women teachers rated this factor extremely low in importance to successful teaching, while men regarded it as moderate in importance. This tends to support the conclusion that women regard successful teaching as being measured by teacher activity rather than pupil performance. A California Study of teachers, cited by Biehler (1974:730) listed a lack of response from students as a major reason for extreme disenchantment with teaching. The perception of successful teaching as being measured by what the teacher does rather than what the pupil does, might explain why women teachers often appear to be more satisfied with teaching than do men.

#### Teacher-controlled factors.

Women teachers rated "Possesses substantial knowledge of subject taught" as extremely high in importance, while men rated the factor as only moderate-to-high in importance to successful teaching. Here

women were in agreement with the findings of educational research, such as Benedict's (1977:95), who found that only one variable in her study distinguished the most effective from the least effective student teachers. The most effective group had a higher grade point average than the least effective group in their subject area.

"Possesses an understanding of self and personal motives" was rated as extremely high in importance by women teachers, while men rated the factor as only moderate-to-high in importance. Again, women were in agreement with the opinion of psychologists, such as Combs (1974:24) who asserted, "the behavior of a teacher, like that of everyone else, is a function of his concept of self." He considered this to be vitally important because:

Whatever we do is always determined by the purposes we have in mind.... What teachers perceive to be their own and society's purpose makes a great deal of difference in their behavior.

Taddeo (1977:11) agreed:

A basic respect and concern for human beings should rate number two after knowing one's self.... A teacher must know and believe in himself if he is to be capable of knowing and believing in others.

Taddeo also indicated that knowing one's self was closely related to the teacher's skill in human relations.

#### CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed that women teachers place a high degree of importance on teacher-controlled factors in teaching success. This would indicate considerable confidence by women in the ability to control their professional destiny. Such a belief would signal a complete change from Feather's 1969, Study which found women teachers more likely to attribute success or failure to external factors than were men.

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